

Message Text

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STADIS/////////////////////////////////
EXDIS

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SUBJECT: THAI REFUGEE POLICY

REF: A. BANGKOK 3267, B. STATE 021760

1. IN SEPTEL DEPARTMENT WILL ADDRESS METHODS WHEREBY THE
RATE OF FLOW OUT OF THAILAND OF REFUGEES APPROVED FOR
U.S. PROGRAM MIGHT BE SPEEDED UP. HOWEVER IT IS IMPORTANT
TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE SOME BUILT-IN CONSTRAINTS
WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO LIMIT PACE OF OUTFLOW. FOR ONE
THING, AS IS ALREADY CLEAR TO EMBASSY, WE CANNOT ENTERTAIN
IDEA OF OPENING RECEPTION CENTER OR TRANSIT QUARTERS
OUTSIDE THAILAND, IN THE U.S. OR ELSEWHERE. TO ATTEMPT
TO DO SO WOULD PRODUCE BACKLASH CAPABLE OF DAMAGING
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PAGE 02 STATE 029956

SERIOUSLY ENTIRE REFUGEE PROGRAM. ALSO EVEN IF MECHANICS
OF U.S. PROGRAM PROCESSING CAN BE SPEEDED, TIME IS STILL
REQUIRED FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO DEVELOP SPONSORS.
THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT SPONSORSHIP OFFERS ARE SHRINKING.
IN FACT WE ARE IMPRESSED WITH THE LONG-RUN PICTURE OF A
STEADY FLOW OF SPONSORSHIP OFFERS; BUT SPONSORSHIPS TAKE

TIME TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT.

2. IN GENERAL, WE HAVE FOUND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VOLAGS SATISFACTORY. AS OF JANUARY 27, THEY REPORT 6,629

SPONSORSHIPS FOR 7,430 BOAT CASES; THIS AT A TIME ABOUT THREE MONTHS AFTER CASES SUBMITTED TO ACVA FOR ASSIGNMENT. WE UNDERSTAND AND CONCUR IN EMBASSY POSITION THAT A FASTER RATE OF SPONSOR ASSURANCES IS DESIRABLE BUT BELIEVE EMBASSY MIGHT MORE USEFULLY CONCENTRATE ITS ATTENTION ON ASPECTS OF PROGRAM FOR WHICH IT HAS OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY.

3. THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS ARE CRITICAL TO A TRANSITION IN USG REFUGEE ACCEPTANCE POLICY FROM THE PAST BASIS OF AD HOC EMERGENCY ACTIONS TO A LONG-TERM, REGULAR ACCEPTANCE POLICY FOR TWO CLASSES OF REFUGEES: BOAT REFUGEES WITHOUT OTHER OFFERS OF RESETTLEMENT AND LAND REFUGEES WHO ARE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED STATES, EITHER THROUGH RELATIVES OR OTHER PAST TIES. ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN ASSURED THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON JANUARY 24 OF THE EARNESTNESS WITH WHICH WE WILL BE ATTEMPTING TO IMPLEMENT THIS KIND OF LONG-TERM APPROACH BEFORE ANOTHER PAROLE ACTION FOR BOAT REFUGEES AND FURTHER BUILD-UP OF QUALIFIED LAND REFUGEES FORCES ANOTHER AD HOC EMERGENCY PAROLE ACTION.

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PAGE 03 STATE 029956

4. GIVEN THE PRESENT CONTEXT IN WHICH WE ARE TRYING TO OBTAIN AN APPROVED LONG-RUN POLICY, AND GIVEN THE FACT THAT WE HAVE JUST AUTHORIZED A PAROLE FOR 7,000 BOAT REFUGEES WHICH MORE THAN COVERS ALL BOAT CASES IN SE ASIA, IT IS PARTICULARLY DISCONCERTING TO LEARN THAT THE RTG IS PLACING SO MUCH STRESS ON RATE OF OUTFLOW OF APPROVED REFUGEES TO THE U.S. IN THE PAST RTG HAS ALWAYS ACCEPTED U.S. GUARANTEE THAT REFUGEES APPROVED FOR THE U.S. WILL MOVE THERE. WE HAVE NEVER RENEGED ON SUCH COMMITMENTS AND DO NOT INTEND TO NOW. RECENT USG ACTIONS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE THIS. DEPARTMENT BELIEVES THAT TO ACCEPT RTG COMPLAINT AS VALID PROVIDES EXCUSE TO TREAT REFUGEES BADLY.

5. MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE RATE OF FLOW FROM THE RTG STANDPOINT IS THE MAXIMIZATION OF THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES DEPARTING FOR THIRD COUNTRIES INCLUDING THE U.S. OVER THE LONG RUN. WE WOULD HOPE EMBASSY COULD INDICATE TO RTG OVER COMING DAYS AND WEEKS THAT WE ARE SEEKING MEANS TO ACCELERATE SOMEWHAT THE RATE OF FLOW BUT THAT THEY SHOULD, IN THEIR OWN LONG-TERM INTERESTS,

ADOPT AN ATTITUDE OF WORKING WITH US RATHER THAN BEING CRITICAL. AS WE HAVE TOLD RTG, AND AS WAS EVIDENT DURING LATEST CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, LACK OF COOPERATION BY THAILAND AND OTHER FIRST ASYLUM COUNTRIES CREATES ATTITUDE HERE THAT U.S. BEING BLACKMAILED. THIS REDUCES OUR

ABILITY TO RESETTLE REFUGEES.

6. AS WE ATTEMPT TO MOVE RAPIDLY TOWARD A LONG-TERM ACCEPTANCE POLICY FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO AVOID GIVING THE PRESS THE IMPRESSION THAT THE CENTRAL FACTOR IN THE RTG ATTITUDE TOWARD INDOCHINA IS THE OUTFLOW RATE. THIS GIVES THAI A STICK TO BEAT US WITH AND DIVERTS ATTENTION FROM THE ACTUAL CHALLENGE AHEAD: TO REGULARIZE THE MEANS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 STATE 029956

ACCEPTING LAND REFUGEES WHO HAVE TIES TO THE U.S. AND BOAT REFUGEES WHO ARE NOT ACCEPTED ELSEWHERE.

7. REFTTEL B ASKS FOR COMMENT ON UPI REPORT THAT RTG NAVAL PATROLS BLOCKING BOAT REFUGEES FROM LANDING. IS THIS HAPPENING? THE CONGRESS IS INQUIRING ON THIS POINT AND REPLY IS REQUIRED ASAP.

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